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# Should Stores Be Allowed to Spy on You?

Two writers face off on the debate.



## ESSAY

### Attention, Shoppers: You Are Being Stalked!

Your favorite store is stealing information from your phone. **By Joshua Peters**

**I**magine you are shopping at your favorite store, and the entire time, you are being **spied** on. **Surveillance** technology records your every move—where you go, what you look at, what you buy. Video cameras zoom in to record your facial expressions.

Creepy, right? Here's the creepiest part: This has probably already happened to you, and you had no idea.

Unbeknownst to shoppers, stores across the U.S. are using spying tools to gather information about millions of their loyal customers. New technology allows store owners to sense customers' smartphones and **track** customers' movements as they shop. Many stores have high-resolution surveillance cameras that can zoom in close enough to see your every freckle.

Why would a retail store go to all this trouble to watch you? You guessed it: money.

The more a business knows about you, the more easily it can manipulate you into buying merchandise. Business owners can see what kinds of displays catch your eye, which items make you

smile, and whether long lines stress you out. After you leave, they might be able to text you a coupon for items you ogled, hoping to lure you back in to spend more cash.

Businesses claim that all this spying is harmless, that they are only gathering the data they need to

make their stores successful. But this "**data gathering**" is another case of businesses invading our **privacy**. Now stores are as bad as online companies like Amazon and Facebook, which collect vast amounts of information about their users.

Not surprisingly, Americans are sick of this shameless spying. In a recent survey conducted by OpinionLab, 77 percent of consumers said in-store cell-phone tracking was unacceptable. Many worried that stores would not keep the information private, that it could be stolen or sold.

There is a bit of good news: Lawmakers are proposing rules to require stores to notify customers when tracking technology is in place. If these laws pass, the next time you're being **stalked** at your favorite store, you might at least know it. ●

